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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 105  
By Beavers

A RESOLUTION to honor the pastor and congregation of the  
Williamson Chapel C.M.E. Church in Wilson  
County for 115 years of service to their Lord and  
community.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations who, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of the people in their community; and

WHEREAS, the good people of the Williamson Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Wilson County comprise one such congregation, as they celebrate the Church's 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary; and

WHEREAS, the congregation was organized some time between 1840 and 1850; the exact time is not clearly known due to the church's records of that time having been destroyed by fire; and

WHEREAS, Dick Mastman, the owner of the plantation on which the church later stood, gave an acre of the land to his slave daughter, Chaney, as a dowry present for her marriage to

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Richard Williamson. During those days, it was prohibited for a woman such as Chaney to own property; Richard Williamson organized the church, which served a dual role of both church and school building and later became known as Williamson Chapel; and

WHEREAS, in 1886, Mr. Williamson donated the property to the Church; the registered deed lists the names of the church's trustees: Cal Gordon (husband of Lizzie Williamson, the daughter of Richard and Chaney Williamson), Joe Johnson, Hiram Williamson (brother of Richard Williamson), Jessie Parker, and John Horton; and

WHEREAS, it is notable that even today, several descendants of slaves of the Mastman plantation and of Dick Mastman, continue to reside in the Needmore Community and worship at Williamson Chapel; and

WHEREAS, since the time of its organization, Williamson Chapel C.M.E. Church has experienced numerous changes, not only in the lives and hearts of the lay people and the pastorate, but also in the church structure itself; and

WHEREAS, the original log church was eventually torn down and a frame building was built; under the astute leadership of the Reverend John H. Britton, from 1936-61, the church organized the Pastor's Aide Board, new choir robes were bought for the newly organized choir, the church's exterior was renovated with a rock veneer, a choir room and a pastor's study were added, electricity and a furnace were both installed; later on, electric heat would warm the little church, even as the gospel being preached within those walls was warming hearts, and souls were being won for Christ; and

WHEREAS, those pastors who served, following Reverend Britton's tenure, at Williamson Chapel were the Reverends Clarence Bagwell, Frank Hudson, Wiley Hatchett, and Dr. Solomon N. Shannon; and

WHEREAS, August of 1984 saw the Reverend George W. Coleman arrive at Williamson Chapel C.M.E. Church; under his leadership, Williamson Chapel experienced great spiritual and physical growth as new members were added to the roster, and new literary texts and other

resource materials for the church library were purchased, as was a new parsonage for the current and future pastors and their families; and

WHEREAS, following Pastor Coleman at Williamson Chapel were the Reverends T.R. Crosslin and Raymond Sommerville. The Reverend Frederick L. Braddock, Sr., served as the church's pastor from 1989-98; it was under his leadership that the church experienced continued growth with a significant membership increase and new ministries being organized, including the male chorus, missionary choir, and men's fellowship, along with a strong emphasis being placed on children and youth ministry; and

WHEREAS, more physical improvements were made during the Reverend Braddock's ministry there: the pews were padded, new windows were installed, new doors were added to the front of the church and to Hatchett Hall, a new piano and drum set were purchased for use during worship, carpet was installed, restrooms refurbished and the pastor's study renovated; and

WHEREAS, the congregation has seen the mortgage paid in full on the parsonage, and the land and former elementary school has been deeded to the church trustees to be used by the church and community; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, the Reverend Woodrow Harris, Jr., became the church's pastor; he, along with his wife, Linda, daughters, Sonya and Camille, and grandson, Isaiah, have excelled as the first family of the Church, leading by example and fostering growth and hope for the future of the Church, thus revitalizing its membership. Under his leadership the Church has prospered: new members have joined the congregation, Wednesday night Bible Study has flourished, and a Wednesday night Bible Study for the children of the Church has been started; and

WHEREAS, several ministers have come from the Needmore community: Bro. Stacey Caruthers was licensed as the first local preacher, and Sis. Claire Jasper was licensed as their first exhorter; in the fall of 1996, the congregation was blessed to have Minister Desmon Daniel

from Saginaw, Michigan, his wife, Rene, and daughter, Jordan, join the church, as Minister Daniel was temporarily part of the ministry at Williamson Chapel while he attended Vanderbilt Divinity School; and

WHEREAS, for one hundred fifteen years many excellent leaders in both the religious and secular arena have emerged from the ranks of Williamson Chapel C.M.E. Church; and

WHEREAS, the Williamson Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has significantly contributed to the social, cultural, and economic vitality of the Needmore community, Wilson County, and the State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we honor the pastor and congregation of the Williamson Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Wilson County for their many years of service to God, their community, and to this state, and extend to them our best wishes as they embark on their next 115 years of humble Christian service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.